WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A computer-implemented method for presenting a help source file comprising:

maintaining a help system comprised of a single set of one or more help source files;

receiving a request to present a help source file;

obtaining a help history file in response to the request, wherein the help history file stores information relating to a usage of the help system; and

displaying a customized presentation of the help source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein computer program code stored within the help source file is configured to display the customized presentation of the help source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

3.   The method of claim 2 wherein the computer program code is written in a scripting language.

4.   The method of claim 2 wherein the computer program code is configured to distinguish between help source files opened from within the help system and those opened from outside of the help system.

5.   The method of claim 1 wherein the one or more help source files are stored in a tagged meta language representation.

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1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the tagged meta language representation

2 comprises hypertext markup language (HTML).

1 7. The method of claim 5 wherein the tagged meta language representation

2 comprises extensible markup language (XML).

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the help file history comprises a cookie.

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein the information stored in the help

2 history file comprises a history of every help source file in the help system opened by a

3 user within a specified time interval.

1 10. The method of claim 1 wherein the information stored in the help

2 history file comprises a user's current location within the help system.

1 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the customized presentation provides for

2 modifying an amount of material from within the help source files that is displayed.

1 12. The method of claim 11 wherein the amount of information displayed is

2 based on an experience level of a user indicated by the help history file.

1 13. The method of claim 1 wherein the presentation is customized based on

2 a type of material within the help source files.

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1   14. A computer-implemented help system for presenting a help file,

2 comprising:

3   a computer having a display device attached thereto;

4   means, performed by the computer, for maintaining a help system comprised of

5 a single set of one or more help source files;

6   means, performed by the computer, for receiving a request to present a help

7 source file;

8   means, performed by the computer, for obtaining a help history file in response

9 to the request, wherein the help history file stores information relating to a usage of the

10 help system; and

11   means, performed by the computer, for displaying a customized presentation of

12 the help source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

1   15. The system of claim 14 wherein the means for displaying a customized

2 presentation of the help source file comprises computer program code stored within the

3 help source file.

1   16. The system of claim 15 wherein the computer program code is written in

2 a scripting language.

1   17. The system of claim 15 wherein the computer program code is

2 configured to distinguish between help source files opened from within the help system

3 and those opened from outside of the help system.

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1   18.   The system of claim 14 wherein the one or more help source files are

2   stored in a tagged meta language representation.

1   19.   The system of claim 18 wherein the tagged meta language representation

2   comprises hypertext markup language (HTML).

1   20.   The system of claim 18 wherein the tagged meta language representation

2   comprises extensible markup language (XML).

1   21.   The system of claim 14 wherein the help file history comprises a cookie.

1   22.   The system of claim 14 wherein the information stored in the help

2   history file comprises a history of every help source file in the help system opened by a

3   user within a specified time interval.

1   23.   The system of claim 14 wherein the information stored in the help

2   history file comprises a user's current location within the help system.

1   24.   The system of claim 14 wherein the customized presentation provides for

2   modifying an amount of material from within the help source files that is displayed.

1   25.   The system of claim 24 wherein the amount of information displayed is

2   based on an experience level of a user indicated by the help history file.

1   26.   The system of claim 14 wherein the presentation is customized based on

2   a type of material within the help source files.

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1   27.   An article of manufacture embodying logic for performing a method for

2   presenting a help source file on a display device connected to a computer, the method

3   comprising:

4   maintaining a help system comprised of a single set of one or more help source

5   files;

6   receiving a request to present a help source file;

7   obtaining a help history file in response to the request, wherein the help history

8   file stores information relating to a usage of the help system; and

9   displaying a customized presentation of the help source file based on the

10   information stored in the help history file.

1   28.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein computer program code

2   stored within the help source file is configured to display the customized presentation of

3   the help source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

1   29.   The article of manufacture of claim 28 wherein the computer program

2   code is written in a scripting language.

1   30.   The article of manufacture of claim 28 wherein the computer program

2   code is configured to distinguish between help source files opened from within the help

3   system and those opened from outside of the help system.

1   31.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the one or more help

2   source files are stored in a tagged meta language representation.

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1   32.   The article of manufacture of claim 31 wherein the tagged meta language

2   representation comprises hypertext markup language (HTML).

1   33.   The article of manufacture of claim 31 wherein the tagged meta language

2   representation comprises extensible markup language (XML).

1   34.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the help file history

2   comprises a cookie.

1   35.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the information stored in

2   the help history file comprises a history of every help source file in the help system

3   opened by a user within a specified time interval.

1   36.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the information stored in

2   the help history file comprises a user's current location within the help system.

1   37.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the customized

2   presentation provides for modifying an amount of material from within the help source

3   files that is displayed.

1   38.   The article of manufacture of claim 37 wherein the amount of

2   information displayed is based on an experience level of a user indicated by the help

3   history file.

1   39.   The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the presentation is

2   customized based on a type of material within the help source files.

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